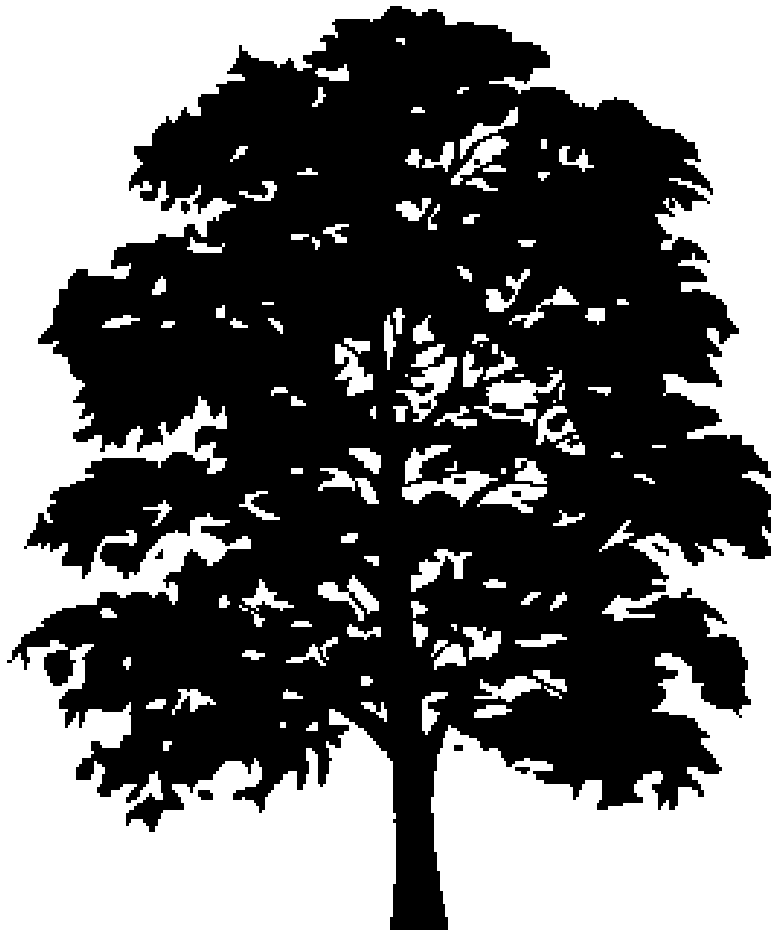


TOMPKINS COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2002 Annual Report



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TOMPKINS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL 2002 ANNUAL REPORT

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (EMC) was created in 1971 by a resolution of the County Board of Representatives (BOR). The EMC acts as an advisory body to the BOR on matters affecting the preservation, development and use of the natural features of the County. The EMC identifies problems, proposes priorities and coordinates activities in the development and management of our natural resources. It provides a public forum for the discussion of issues related to the natural environment in Tompkins County. Staff and equipment are shared between the EMC and the Tompkins County Planning Department. In 2002, the EMC reported directly to the BOR's Planning Committee. County Representative Dooley Kiefer served as the BOR's liaison to the EMC.

Susan Brock served a third term as Chair of the EMC in 2002. Ms. Brock reported to the Planning Committee on the EMC's activities and goals throughout the year. She also drafted correspondence on behalf of the EMC and served as the group's primary liaison to the BOR. She is a dedicated proponent and spokesperson for environmental issues. Through her leadership, she has significantly enhanced the reputation of the EMC as an advisory board to the County Board of Representatives. The EMC wishes to thank Ms. Brock for her guidance.

Tom Mank served as the EMC Coordinator for the first part of 2002 and Heather McDaniel assumed these duties in April for the remainder of the year. The Coordinator provides organizational and technical assistance to the Council and assists in coordinating EMC activities with other governmental advisory boards, County departments and the BOR.

The EMC News completed its ninth year of publication in 2002. The *News* is an important form of communication that is used to introduce resolutions, make announcements, provide committee reports and update members and other interested parties on the activities of the EMC each month.

EMC members are appointed by the County Board of Representatives to serve two-year terms. Membership was fairly steady in 2002 with nine at-large members (out of twelve available seats) that have a variety of backgrounds and levels of expertise. Eleven municipal representatives (out of sixteen) provided an important link between countywide and local issues. The Executive Committee appointed eight associate members who participated on EMC committees.

EMC members participate on the Council by attending monthly general meetings, working in task-oriented committees, and serving as liaisons for other committees or organizations. Six committees were formed at the organizational meeting at the beginning of 2002: Education, Environmental Review, Energy, Executive, Pesticide Neighbor Notification, and Public Safety Communications System. Three additional committees were established during the year: Water Monitoring, Unique Natural Areas, and Hudson River PCB.

RESOLUTIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

The EMC passed five resolutions in 2002. The first resolution was passed in March recommending that the Board of Representatives adopt the Tompkins County Vital Communities Initiative Development and Preservation Principles. The initiative focuses on, among other things, preserving Tompkins

County's unique characteristics, its community centers, and its natural and cultural resources. It provides a basis for intermunicipal coordination and cooperation on issues that impact our community. The BOR adopted the Interim Vital Communities Interim Development and Preservation Principles in June.

The second resolution passed in 2002 recommended that Tompkins County adopt the New York State Pesticide Neighbor Notification Law. The EMC was instrumental in providing support and information concerning this law to the BOR and other interested parties throughout the year. In December the Board of Representatives adopted a local law authorizing pesticide neighbor notification in Tompkins County. The law will go into effect on January 1, 2003.

In May the EMC passed its third resolution in support of conducting a needs assessment for detailed studies of surficial aquifers in Tompkins County. This was an initiative of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council. The resolution affirmed the EMC's support of their efforts to elevate the level of awareness about the importance of groundwater resources in the County and the critical need for additional aquifer studies. The BOR approved a resolution in May authorizing funding for the assessment. In addition to the resolution, EMC municipal members discussed some of the important issues that the BOR is grappling with as they pertain to municipal participation in detailed aquifer studies with their municipalities. Municipal representatives shared their responses with Kate Hackett, the Tompkins County Water Resources Planner.

The fourth resolution was passed in July recommending an emissions reduction target for County government operations, which the BOR adopted in August. In 2001 the BOR adopted a resolution, on recommendation of the EMC, to join the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, a voluntary program for municipal governments to help combat global warming at the local level by working through a five step process to identify and implement reduction measures. An inventory of

greenhouse gas emissions was completed in 2001 that supplied baseline data and forecasts for the County. The target adopted by the BOR calls for a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from County government operations by 2008. The third step, developing a Local Action Plan, will be completed in 2003.

The fifth resolution was passed in December in support of the Coal Tar Advisory Committee. The citizen-based organization is advocating for a full and complete investigation and clean up of coal tar contamination in a local neighborhood in the City of Ithaca. The City's Common Council passed a resolution supporting the residents' efforts in January 2003.

The EMC also sent official correspondence in 2002. In May a letter was sent to the EPA opposing a recommendation to amend the Clean Air Act that would allow power plants to expand without bringing their facilities into compliance with new emissions regulations. In October a letter was sent to the Department of Environmental Conservation in support of the proposed Environmental Justice Policy. The EMC requested that in addition to low income and minority populations, the policy also be extended to any community that has been subject to disproportionate adverse environmental impacts.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The EMC remained active with the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils (NYSAEMC) as well as providing valuable resources to other EMC's in 2002. Three EMC representatives attended the NYSAEMC annual conference that was held in Corning. It provided a good networking opportunity to meet dedicated volunteers and learn about other projects that EMC's throughout the state have undertaken. Breakout sessions included discussions on Community Environmental Management, Scenic By-Ways, GIS Modeling, and Watershed Protection.

The EMC Chair attended a meeting in Owego in February along with EMC representatives from

Broome and Chemung Counties where they talked to a group of about 50 people interested in establishing an EMC in Tioga County. Information and support was given throughout the year and we were pleased to hear that the Tioga County Legislature voted to establish an EMC in November.

In April an EMC representative gave a presentation on the *Tompkins County Unique Natural Areas Inventory* to the Broome County EMC. The inventory received recognition from the New York State Association of EMCs and many organizations have modeled inventories after it. The Broome County EMC is considering undertaking a similar project.

SPECIAL MEETINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

Pesticide Neighbor Notification: Jason Browne of the New York Public Interest Research Group discussed the Pesticide Neighbor Notification Law on February 13th. The law was passed at the state level in 2000 and allows for counties to adopt a local law that would provide notification to neighbors prior to any commercial lawn application of a pesticide. The meeting was well attended by representatives from interested agencies and the general public. In March, representatives from the commercial lawncare industry provided additional information on this issue.

Catch the Wind: Ron Kamen of Community Energy gave a presentation about wind power and the new State wind power campaign on June 12th. NYSEG and Community Energy teamed up to provide customers with an opportunity to make monthly financial contributions to provide renewable wind energy in New York State.

West Campus Residential Initiative: John Kiefer and Jean Reese of Cornell University provided an overview of the new residential initiative that will replace existing student dormitories with five program houses and a new university parking lot. They provided an overview of the project, answered questions and addressed member concerns. Members commented on the alternative sites for the

parking lot, stormwater and emergency management plans, and requested that the building designs incorporate more energy efficient measures.

MUNICIPAL COMMUNICATION

The EMC scheduled quarterly municipal reports in 2002 to allow EMC municipal representatives to report on activities or concerns in their respective municipalities. The reports facilitated communication on environmental issues and gave municipalities an opportunity to utilize the skills and resources of the EMC.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Education Committee – The Education Committee participated in the annual Earth Day celebration, providing a sample copy of the Unique Natural Areas Inventory and a variety of maps produced by the Planning Department's Geographic Information Systems Analyst. They arranged for a representative from Community Wind to speak at the EMC meeting in May about Catch the Wind, New York State's wind power campaign. In the future, this committee expects to advertise more about the availability of wind power. The committee initiated the EMC's Adopt-A-Highway participation in 2002. Members received safety training and held three clean-up days on their portion of New York State Route 13 between Warren Road and Route 366. Look for the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council Adopt-A-Highway designation the next time you are in the neighborhood! The committee discussed pressure treated wood, which will be voluntarily phased out. They also continued to follow the issue of banning burn barrels, which stalled in the New York State Senate in 2002.

Environmental Review Committee – The Environmental Review Committee (ERC) met monthly throughout the year to review and provide comments on projects that could potentially impact the environment in Tompkins County. The committee brings a wide variety of perspectives to bear on project reviews. Through this perspective, the committee tries

to advocate for environmentally sound development.

The ERC sent letters of support for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the proposed Cornell College of Veterinary Medical Waste Management Facility and to the Danby Park Association in support of the preliminary plans for the Danby Community Park. The ERC also sent comments to the Department of Environmental Conservation in support of the State Pollution Discharge and Elimination System permit renewal for Lake Source Cooling requesting that the permit be expanded to include additional sampling sites and parameters that are currently being monitored, but are not required by the permit. The ERC reviewed and provided substantial comments on the site plan for the Benderson Development on Elmira Road in the City of Ithaca; the scoping process and the DEIS for the Downtown Development Project in the City of Ithaca; and the DEIS for the West Campus Residential Initiative at Cornell University.

The ERC reviewed, and did not find reason to comment on proposals for property acquisition at the County Airport, the addition of administrative office space adjacent to the existing hangar at the airport, and the Cargill Salt mine expansion. The ERC requested to be included as an interested party on the Cargill Salt project.

At the request of the Planning Committee of the Tompkins County Board of Representatives, the ERC made recommendations on oil and gas leasing on specific County properties and also commented on generic oil and gas leases developed by the County Attorney. ERC members, along with Planning Committee representatives and Planning Department staff, visited the Newfield Reforestry Lands to assess the site for possible oil and gas leasing and also viewed a seismic test that was performed at the site to determine the presence of oil and gas deposits underground. The ERC also forwarded concerns to the Planning Committee about the appropriateness of snowmobile trails traversing Unique Natural Areas. This topic was referred

to the UNA Committee of the EMC for further impact assessment.

Energy Committee – The Energy Committee accomplished much in their first year. They submitted comments on the NYS Draft Energy Plan, and some were incorporated. They wrote to the Planning Committee and BOR recommending a fuel neutral choice for the Governor's Acid Deposition Regulations, describing the potential impacts on local power generators such as AES Cayuga. A committee member attended the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) / Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) conference in Seattle. They initiated an EMC resolution that was later adopted by the BOR, setting a 20% reduction target by 2008 for greenhouse gas emissions by county government operations (This was milestone 2 of the CCP). The County is developing a Local Action Plan (Milestone 3 of the CCP), with the help of an intern in the Planning Department, which will focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions produced by the County buildings and automobile fleet.

The committee was instrumental in submitting an application for the Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention for the Tompkins County Public Library Solar Panel Installation, although the project was not chosen. They continue to monitor the performance of the solar panels, and provided comments in the news media and to the BOR. They provided an information table at the Library on Solar Tour Day and participated in a public education partnership workshop in Syracuse.

The committee kept abreast of the residential energy choices provided as a result of deregulation in New York State. Representatives attended two meetings at Tompkins Community Action about residential energy supply choices and submitted an op-ed piece for the Ithaca Journal assessing the supplier options. A member of the committee also joined the Finger Lakes Energy Task Force to interact with other members.

Hudson River PCB Committee – This committee was created in response to a request from the Niagara County EMC asking for support in their efforts to keep PCB-contaminated material from the Hudson River/General Electric clean-up from being transported across the state and landfilled in Niagara County (where the only hazardous waste landfill licensed to accept PCBs in the northeast is located). The committee continues to gather information about the PCB issue.

In a related issue, the committee prepared comments on the Department of Environmental Conservation's proposed Environmental Justice Policy requesting that the policy be extended to cover any community that has already been subject to disproportionate adverse environmental impacts.

Pesticide Neighbor Notification Committee – This committee researched and provided information in support of the New York State Pesticide Neighbor Notification Law (NNL), which the County passed as a local law in December. Action to recommend the local law began in 2001 with an educational effort. The EMC passed a resolution in support of NNL at its April 2002 meeting. Getting this law passed involved interaction with the Planning Committee, Health & Human Services Committee, and the Board of Health. The process included public meetings and a public hearing, all of which had good EMC participation. The Committee wishes to thank Dooley Kiefer for all of her efforts that helped moved the NNL through each step after the EMC recommended opting in. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and the EMC will help with the education aspect of the new law.

Tompkins County is often looked to as an example for its environmental actions throughout the state. Inquiries and requests for information were fielded from a number of municipalities debating this same issue. New York Public Interest Research Group is using the EMC's resolution in support of the NNL as a

model for other counties. We expect that other counties may follow Tompkins County's lead and opt in to the NNL.

Public Safety Communications System Committee – This committee provided comments on the draft Request for Proposals for the Tompkins County Public Safety Communication Project in 2002. County Administration provided periodic status reports to the EMC throughout the year as the project progressed. The committee expects to be more active next year as the project moves forward.

Unique Natural Areas Committee – This committee was reactivated in 2002 to develop a policy for adding new parcels and providing periodic reviews to the *Unique Natural Areas Inventory of Tompkins County*. The committee also documented information for a new UNA, consisting of about 15 acres of hawthorn orchards at Cornell University. The committee hopes to establish the hawthorn orchards as UNA-193 in 2003.

The Unique Natural Areas Inventory of Tompkins County was updated in 2000 and identifies 192 areas in the County that contain outstanding examples of natural environments. Although UNAs are not regulated, the inventory is used as a land-use planning tool by the County and its municipalities.

Water Monitoring Committee – This committee was formed late in the year and members worked on gathering information on lake water monitoring information.

EMC LIAISONS

EMC members served as liaisons to the Cornell Community Waste Management Advisory Committee, Cornell Lake Source Cooling Data Sharing Group, Intermunicipal Organization for Cayuga Lake Management Plan, Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan and the Tompkins County Water Resources Council. Liaisons attended and participated in meetings, and reported back to the EMC.

2002 EMC MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Appointed EMC Members and Representation

Robert Ascher	At-Large
Susan Brock	At-Large
Kenneth Christianson	At-Large
Barbara Ebert	At-Large
Karen Edelstein	At-Large
Herb Engman	At-Large
Carolyn Shapiro	At-Large
Steven Uzmann	At-Large
Roger Yonkin	At-Large
Stephen Nicholson	Town of Caroline
Robert Roe	Town of Danby
Joyce Gerbasi	Town of Dryden
Darrel Clark	Town of Enfield
Don Weir	Town of Ithaca
Larry Sharpsteen	Town of Lansing
Donna Jean Darling	Town of Newfield
Christian Boissonnas	Town of Ulysses
Jeff Cox	Village of Cayuga Heights
Bruce Johnson	Village of Freeville
John Dennis	Village of Lansing

Associate Members

Walter Buble	Susan Kerns Robinson
Peter Harriott	Hans van Binsbergen
Gay Nicholson	David Weinstein
Nancy Ostman	Robert Wesley

Ex-Officio Members

Dooley Kiefer	Board of Representatives Liaison
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EMC Staff

Heather McDaniel	EMC Coordinator
Tom Mank	EMC Coordinator
Dariele Drake	EMC Principal Account Clerk
Kathy Wilsea	EMC Secretary